



# SOMERVILLE

## Middlesex County



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## NARRATIVE

### **Narrative**

The City of Somerville is an urban industrial city in the Mystic Valley on the Boston transportation corridor to the northwest. It occupies about 4.1 square miles along the divide between the lower Charles and Mystic River watersheds. Somerville was a critical military position in the Revolution, with fortifications on Prospect Hill, and was an important corridor of turnpike, canal and railroad routes from Boston during the early 19th century. But in its earliest history, Somerville served as the grazing lands for the residents of Charlestown with only a few scattered permanent settlements. Among them was Governor Winthrop's estate at Ten Hills, the location of the first ship built in the colonies, the Blessing of the Bay, in 1631.

Somerville's location, close to Boston and Charlestown, assured early development of markets for the city's agriculture and dairying products as well as well as for pottery, bricks and slate. Establishment of the area as a town in 1842 stimulated growth and in eight years the community's population more than tripled. In each of the next decades, until 1870, the population doubled. Many of the new settlers, including a large number of Irish immigrants, worked in the various brickyards of Somerville, producing as many as 1.3 million bricks a year by hand or 5.5 million with a new patent press. In 1851, the American Tube Works was opened and began manufacturing the first seamless brass tubes in the U.S. using an English patent. This marked the entrance of heavy industry into Somerville, and was soon followed by rolling and slitting mills, iron works and manufacturers of steam engines and boilers. Diversification into glass production, food processing and meat packing soon followed.

Establishment of street car lines opened Somerville's greatest suburban growth and population again exploded, growing six fold between 1870 and 1915. Development explosions in other parts of the country increased the demand for bricks and at the highest point of production, 24 million bricks were being made a year in the 12 brickyards in the city, while the scale of the meat packing industry earned Somerville the reputation as the Chicago of New England. The city's population reached its peak during the Second World War when 105,883 people were said to create a density greater than that of Calcutta. Closely built two family homes and three deckers were put up around the city to house this population, many of whom worked in the Ford Motor Company plant, at the First National warehouse or in the wholesale slaughtering and meatpacking industry.

(Seal supplied by community. Narrative based on information provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission)



# GEOGRAPHY

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## Location

Eastern Massachusetts, bordered by Arlington on the west, Medford on the north, Everett and Boston on the east, and Cambridge on the south and southeast. Somerville is 3 miles north of Boston, 22 miles south of Lowell, 40 miles east of Worcester, and 220 miles from New York City. Logan International Airport is 3.5 miles from Somerville.

**Total Area:** 4.22 sq. miles

**Land Area:** 4.11 sq. miles

**Population:** 76,210

**Density:** 18,543 per sq. mile

## Climate

(National Climatic Data Center)

(Boston WSO Station)

Normal temperature in January.....28.6°F

Normal temperature in July.....73.5°F

Normal annual precipitation.....41.5"

## U.S.G.S. Topographical Plates

Boston North, Boston South, Lexington

## Regional Planning Agency

Metropolitan Area Planning Council

## Metropolitan Statistical Area

(1993 Definition)

Boston



# GOVERNMENT

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## Municipal Offices

Main Number: (617) 625-6600

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

## Form of Government

Mayor-Council

## Year Incorporated

As a town: 1842

As a city: 1872

## Registered Voters (Secretary of State 1994)

	Number	%	
Total Registered	31,219		
Democrats	20,664	66.2	%
Republicans	2,005	6.4	%
Other parties	30	0.1	%
Unenrolled Voters	8,520	27.3	%

## Legislators

[Senators and Representatives by City and Town](#)



# DEMOGRAPHICS

**Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000**

Geographic Area: Somerville city, Massachusetts

[For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total population.....	77,478	100.0	<b>HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE</b>		
<b>SEX AND AGE</b>			Total population.....	77,478	100.0
Male.....	37,730	48.7	Hispanic or Latino (of any race).....	6,786	8.8
Female.....	39,748	51.3	Mexican.....	464	0.6
Under 5 years.....	3,500	4.5	Puerto Rican.....	776	1.0
5 to 9 years.....	3,085	4.0	Cuban.....	173	0.2
10 to 14 years.....	3,086	4.0	Other Hispanic or Latino.....	5,373	6.9
15 to 19 years.....	4,156	5.4	Not Hispanic or Latino.....	70,692	91.2
20 to 24 years.....	9,992	12.9	White alone.....	56,320	72.7
25 to 34 years.....	21,362	27.6	<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>		
35 to 44 years.....	11,623	15.0	Total population.....	77,478	100.0
45 to 54 years.....	7,802	10.1	In households.....	74,963	96.8
55 to 59 years.....	2,582	3.3	Householder.....	31,555	40.7
60 to 64 years.....	2,191	2.8	Spouse.....	10,155	13.1
65 to 74 years.....	4,069	5.2	Child.....	15,362	19.8
75 to 84 years.....	2,934	3.8	Own child under 18 years.....	10,151	13.1
85 years and over.....	1,106	1.4	Other relatives.....	4,760	6.1
Median age (years).....	31.1	(X)	Under 18 years.....	1,069	1.4
18 years and over.....	66,983	85.2	Nonrelatives.....	13,141	17.0
Male.....	31,836	41.1	Unmarried partner.....	2,088	2.7
Female.....	34,147	44.1	In group quarters.....	2,515	3.2
21 years and over.....	62,285	80.4	Institutionalized population.....	316	0.4
62 years and over.....	9,379	12.1	Noninstitutionalized population.....	2,199	2.8
65 years and over.....	8,099	10.5	<b>HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE</b>		
Male.....	3,004	3.9	Total households.....	31,555	100.0
Female.....	5,095	6.6	Family households (families).....	14,668	46.5
<b>RACE</b>			With own children under 18 years.....	5,944	18.8
One race.....	73,721	95.2	Married-couple family.....	10,155	32.2
White.....	59,635	77.0	With own children under 18 years.....	4,148	13.1
Black or African American.....	5,035	6.5	Female householder, no husband present.....	3,251	10.3
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	171	0.2	With own children under 18 years.....	1,458	4.6
Asian.....	4,990	6.4	Nonfamily households.....	16,887	53.5
Asian Indian.....	1,363	1.8	Householder living alone.....	9,797	31.0
Chinese.....	1,862	2.4	Householder 65 years and over.....	2,774	8.8
Filipino.....	161	0.2	Households with individuals under 18 years.....	6,603	20.9
Japanese.....	289	0.4	Households with individuals 65 years and over.....	6,099	19.3
Korean.....	462	0.6	Average household size.....	2.38	(X)
Vietnamese.....	329	0.4	Average family size.....	3.06	(X)
Other Asian <sup>1</sup> .....	524	0.7	<b>HOUSING OCCUPANCY</b>		
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	50	0.1	Total housing units.....	32,477	100.0
Native Hawaiian.....	6	-	Occupied housing units.....	31,555	97.2
Guamanian or Chamorro.....	15	-	Vacant housing units.....	922	2.8
Samoa.....	14	-	For seasonal, recreational, or		
Other Pacific Islander <sup>2</sup> .....	15	-	occasional use.....	88	0.3
Some other race.....	3,840	5.0	Homeowner vacancy rate (percent).....	0.8	(X)
Two or more races.....	3,757	4.8	Rental vacancy rate (percent).....	1.6	(X)
<i>Race alone or in combination with one</i>			<b>HOUSING TENURE</b>		
<i>or more other races:</i> <sup>3</sup>			Occupied housing units.....	31,555	100.0
White.....	62,447	80.6	Owner-occupied housing units.....	9,656	30.6
Black or African American.....	6,122	7.9	Renter-occupied housing units.....	21,899	69.4
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	443	0.6	Average household size of owner-occupied units.....	2.59	(X)
Asian.....	5,558	7.2	Average household size of renter-occupied units.....	2.28	(X)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	139	0.2			
Some other race.....	6,652	8.6			

- Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

<sup>2</sup> Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

<sup>3</sup> In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.



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# HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

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**Home Sales** (Banker & Tradesman) -

[Town Stats - Free market Statistics](#)

**Subsidized Housing Units** (DHCD 1998)

[DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory](#)

Subsidized Housing Units: The number of housing units which count toward the municipality's 10% goal for low- and moderate-income housing. It includes both subsidized affordable units and market rate units in certain eligible subsidized developments.

**Public Housing Units** (DHCD 1999)

Conventional State: 1,009

Conventional Federal: 421

**Rental Assistance**(DHCD 1999)

State (MRVP: 84

Federal (Section 8): 880



# TRANSPORTATION

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## TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

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Somerville is situated in the Greater Boston Area, which has excellent rail, air, and highway facilities. State Route 128 and Interstate Route 495 divide the region into inner and outer zones, which are connected by numerous "spokes" providing direct access to the airport, port, and intermodal facilities of Boston.

### Major Highways

Major highways include State Route 28/McGrath Highway, State Route 16/Alewife Brook Parkway, and State Route 38/Mystic Avenue. Interstate Route 93 passes through the eastern sector of the city.

### Rail

MBTA subway service is available on the Red Line at Davis Square (16 min. to Park Street; no MBTA parking). It is also easily accessible at Porter Square Station in Cambridge, with connection to the Fitchburg commuter line, at Lechmere Station on the Green Line, and Sullivan Station on the Orange Line. Conrail (617-783-6222) and the Springfield Terminal Railway (508-663-1073) offer freight service and interchange traffic in Somerville.

### Bus

Somerville is a member of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The MBTA offers fixed route bus service to neighboring communities, to Lechmere Station on the Green Line, and to Sullivan Station on the Orange Line. The MBTA also provides THE RIDE, a paratransit service for the elderly and disabled.

### Other

Logan International Airport is easily accessible from Somerville.



# CULTURE AND RECREATION

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## LIBRARIES

[Board of Library Commissioners On-line Library Catalog](#)

## MUSEUMS

(American Association of Museums)

The Somerville Museum

1 Westwood Road

(617) 666-9810

## RECREATION

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

**Recreational Facilities** (Recreational sites and activities)

[Department of Environmental Management Recreation Section](#)



# MISCELLANEOUS

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## HEALTH FACILITIES

(Dept. of Public Health 1992)

### Hospitals

Heritage Hospital  
Somerville Hospital, Inc.

### Long Term Care

Jeanne Jugan Residence  
Somerville Home  
Sunrise Nursing Home, Inc

### Hospices

None

### Rest Homes

James Manor Rest Home  
Reagan's Resident Care Facility  
Somerville Home For The Aged

### UTILITIES

[Telephone Numbers for Public Utilities](#)



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NOTE: The COMMUNITY PROFILE draws information from a diversity of sources. The main source of information is listed under each section. In some instances comments submitted by the municipality were incorporated to correct and/or enhance the information obtained from the main source. However, no changes were made to those data bases which must be consistent throughout the state. DHCD has made efforts to ensure the accuracy of all data in the COMMUNITY PROFILES, but cannot take responsibility for any consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this document.